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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

12 December 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR THE INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SE-34: Consequences of an Attempt to Overthrow
the Present Regime in Albania

1. The attached draft estimate has been approved by the Board of National Estimates pursuant to a consideration of it by the IAC representatives.

2. This estimate will be placed on the agenda of the next IAC meeting, unless the undersigned is notified by close of business Monday, 15 December, that another meeting of the IAC representatives is required.

3. Please continue to exercise special security precautions in handling this estimate.


Executive Secretary

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

12 December 1952

SUBJECT: SE-34: CONSEQUENCES OF AN ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW THE
PRESENT REGIME IN ALBANIA

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the consequences of an attempt to overthrow
the present regime in Albania by a coup.

ESTIMATE

I. THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. In Albania there is widespread dissatisfaction with the
present regime. Even within the Albanian Government and within
the Albanian Communist Party a loss of confidence in the long-
term prospects of the regime and an increased sense of personal
insecurity appear to have developed.

2. Resistance activity in Albania has increased during the
past year, in part as a result of increased activity by emigre
elements, some of them supported by Western governments. Rumors

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and reports of plans for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime have been widely circulated. Most of the European intelligence services, including those of the USSR and Albania, are aware of connections of the emigres with Western governments and probably believe that some sort of plan for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime is in the making.

3. Both the USSR and the present Albanian leaders have demonstrated sensitivity and uneasiness over this situation and have publicly accused the West, and especially the US, of "organizing provocations" against Albania.

4. The USSR almost certainly desires to keep Albania within the Soviet Bloc, even though it is an economic liability and an isolated outpost. Loss of Albania would be damaging to Soviet prestige and would reduce Soviet capabilities for exerting pressure on Yugoslavia and Greece. Nevertheless, the USSR has not entered into a mutual assistance pact with Albania, as it has with its other European Satellites (except East Germany). Albania has such a pact only with Bulgaria.

5. The interests of Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia in Albania conflict, and each of these three countries probably prefers continuance of the status quo to a change which might prove favorable to any of the others or detrimental to its own interests.

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6. Of these three, Yugoslavia appears the most hopeful of eventually achieving some change in the Albanian regime favorable to itself. As we estimated in NIZ-42/1 (20 October 1952), there are advantages for Yugoslavia in its present policy of applying political pressure against the Albanian regime without directly intervening or precipitating a coup attempt. By continuing their present course, the Yugoslavs can promote the predominance of the Yugoslav-supported group within the Albanian emigre movement. They can undermine order and stability in Albania without serious risk of international complications, while developing contacts with disaffected elements within the Albanian regime. If successful in these efforts, they will have placed themselves in a favorable position to exploit any safe opportunity for intervention or to exercise preponderant influence in any new regime.

7. We believe that the Yugoslavs have no present intention of precipitating a coup against the Hoxha regime. They probably calculate that to do so would create serious risks of provoking Western disfavor and Soviet retaliation. They probably would stage a coup, if they thought it could be done without incurring these risks; they might therefore be willing to cooperate with other powers in a coup attempt at some future date. However, Yugoslavia's cooperation probably would be contingent upon

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sufficient Yugoslav control over the method and nature of the coup attempt to minimize the dangers to Yugoslavia and upon a belief that Yugoslavia could eventually dominate the new Albanian regime.

8. Under present circumstances, the other nations of Western Europe, including the UK, almost certainly prefer the status quo in Albania to the risks which would be involved in an attempt to establish a pro-Western regime.

II. REACTIONS TO A COUP ATTEMPT

A. Soviet Bloc Reaction

9. The Soviet Bloc reaction to a coup attempt against the Hoxha regime would depend upon the manner and speed in which the coup was carried out, upon the reactions of other interested powers, and upon the global situation existing at the time.

10. If the USSR should learn of a coup plan in advance, it almost certainly would take preventive action. A variety of such actions would be possible, ranging from improved security precautions and liquidations within Albania to the dispatch of Soviet or Satellite forces to Albania and shows of force on the Yugoslav and Greek borders. The Soviet rulers would exploit

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the situation so as to create maximum division, suspicion, and mistrust among the NATO countries and within the free world generally. If the USSR did not learn of a planned coup in advance, but the coup was quickly suppressed by the present Albanian regime, the USSR would exploit the situation in the same manner.

11. If a coup were attempted and proved a quick success, the Soviet rulers would be faced with a difficult decision. Several possibilities present themselves:

- a. Global war: We believe it highly unlikely that the Soviet rulers would deliberately initiate global war over Albania.
- b. Local military counteraction: Regardless of who initiated or supported the coup, the Soviet rulers might conclude that to accept the loss of Albania would open the Soviet Bloc to new and stronger challenges which would result in eventual and serious losses of position. Therefore, they might direct the European Satellites to advance through Yugoslavia in order to come to Albania's assistance. They would, in such an event, expect serious strains to develop in the North Atlantic coalition. On the other hand, they would recognize the risk that the West would come to Yugoslavia's support with consequent grave danger of global war. We believe

that the USSR probably would not take this risk.

c. Acceptance of the loss of Albania and retaliation elsewhere: If the Soviet leaders were unwilling to accept the risks of global war which would be implicit in local military counteraction, they would be obliged to accept the loss of Albania. However, the Soviet leaders would probably intensify their pressures at vulnerable points in the free world (for example, in Berlin, Vienna, Iran, or Indochina) in an attempt to offset the psychological effect of the Albanian loss.

d. Political counteractions: At a minimum the USSR would intensify its propaganda campaign against the West, exploiting whatever rifts had occurred in connection with the Albanian coup. It might make shows of force and attempt to divide the West by threats of war. It might, depending upon its assessment of the attitudes of the various member nations, take an appeal to the UN or encourage some uncommitted country to do so.

12. In the long run, if local or global war were avoided, a coup attempt in Albania, whether successful or not, would make little difference in the Soviet attitude toward the West. The Soviet rulers would regard the coup attempt as merely an incident in the long-term struggle between Communism and capitalism.

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They probably would, therefore, intensify their military preparations and improve their war-readiness.

13. A coup attempt in Albania, particularly if it were successful, would raise the hopes of dissident elements within the other Satellite countries. It might in some cases provoke premature and futile resistance efforts. It would provoke greater security efforts by the Soviet and Satellite authorities.

B. Yugoslavia

14. Because of their recent predominance in Albania, their hopes to re-establish dominance in any new regime, and their extreme vulnerability to any Soviet or Satellite counter-action, the Yugoslavs would regard any attempt to overthrow the Albanian regime as a matter of vital concern to their national interests. If such an attempt proved successful and did not provoke Soviet retaliation, the Yugoslavs would almost certainly make intensive efforts to dominate the new regime. If the coup attempt proved unsuccessful, whether or not Yugoslavia participated, the Yugoslavs would make every effort to disassociate themselves from the scheme.

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C. Greece and Italy

15. Because of their historic interests in Albania, both the Greeks and the Italians would be deeply concerned over any coup attempt in Albania. If the Yugoslavs initiated or participated in such a coup, to the exclusion of the Greeks and the Italians, both would be deeply resentful and would endeavor to counteract Yugoslav influence. It is doubtful that they would individually take military action, but they would probably assume that they had been betrayed by their allies, and distrust and suspicion would thenceforth greatly reduce their cooperation in joint efforts to improve the Western security position in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, if the coup in Albania were to be carried out without Yugoslav participation and under US control, the Italians and Greeks would probably provide a measure of discreet cooperation. Once the new Albanian regime took over, the Italians would probably try to establish some measure of influence over it. Greece would display concern by re-asserting its claim to northern Epirus.

D. Other European Nations

16. Because of their fear of upsetting the present precarious peace of Europe, the Western European powers, if consulted in

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advance, almost certainly would strongly oppose a coup in Albania. If such a coup were precipitated against their advice, or without consulting them, their reaction would be one of fear of Soviet retaliation and resentment at what they would regard as reckless and provocative action by the initiators. This would be particularly true if the US were identified with the coup. Even if the coup proved successful and did not provoke any serious Soviet retaliation, there would be continuing concern over the possibility of further similar US initiatives and fear of heightened Soviet counterpressures to offset the impact of Albania's loss. Governments of Western Europe, caught between popular feelings and their recognition of the need for avoiding division within the Western coalition, would face difficult parliamentary situations. Most of them probably would be able to continue their policies in support of the North Atlantic alliance, but with more hazards and delays. An unsuccessful coup with which the US was clearly identified would weaken the US moral and political position. By and large, regardless of the outcome, there would be a strong feeling among the major Western European powers that too much had been risked for too small a potential gain.

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III. PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN ALBANIA IN THE EVENT OF A
SUCCESSFUL COUP

17. Any new regime in Albania, regardless of its leadership, orientation, or outside support, would face substantial--but not insoluble--internal problems. If the new leadership were strong and competent, the people generally would support it. The new regime would require not only political and military support, but also continuing economic support by the West, presumably by the US. If the major Western powers, and particularly the US, announced and fulfilled an intention to provide political and economic support to the new regime, Albanian popular support almost certainly would be forthcoming.

18. For some time after the coup regime was installed its precise political orientation would depend upon the personalities controlling it and their relationship with the West. As noted above, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy would all try to gain some kind of special position or predominance. The Greeks would probably want a special status for northern Epirus. The Italians would perhaps ask for restoration of some of their pre-war economic concessions, and also seek a gradual re-establishment of part of their pre-war political influence. The Yugoslavs would try to infiltrate and eventually to dominate the regime. The new regime,

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like all previous regimes in Albania, would need the active support and protection of a larger power. The precise behavior of Albania's three neighbors would be influenced by the extent of US commitments to the new regime.

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